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Letter dated 20 June 2005 from the Permanent Representative of Armenia to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I am writing to inform you that on 19 June 2005, the fourth parliamentary elections were held in the Republic of Nagorno Karabakh since 1991, when the Republic declared its independence from Azerbaijan on the basis of a referendum conducted according to the norms of international law and the existing legislation of the time. Previous elections to the Republic of Nagorno Karabakh legislative body were held in 1995 and 2000. About 100 observers from the Czech Republic, Greece, Iran, Russia, the United Kingdom, the United States and other nations monitored the 19 June parliamentary elections.

Elections in Nagorno Karabakh are held with the intent to secure the self-governance of the population living within its territory and strengthen the democratic institutions, which is encouraged by the international community at large.

The document that mandated the Minsk process, adopted by the Council of Ministers of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe in Helsinki in 1992, referred specifically to the attendance of Nagorno Karabakh, as one side of the negotiations, represented by their elected authorities. The summary of conclusions of the additional meeting of the Council of Ministers stated that elected and other representatives of Nagorno Karabakh would be invited to the Minsk conference as interested parties by the Chairman of the Conference after consultations with the States participating at the Conference.

Law and order are not just desirable but also necessary for Nagorno Karabakh, even if its final status is still undetermined. Popularly elected authorities become an important factor in the negotiation process and in implementing whatever agreements may be reached through negotiations. They are also an expression of the people's right to self-determination.

The 2005 parliamentary elections in Nagorno Karabakh were the first held under a new electoral code, which introduced numerous improvements to the procedures in force during previous presidential, parliamentary and local elections. Of the nine political parties in Nagorno Karabakh, eight nominated candidates. Six of the parties ran on separate party tickets and two parties established a common party ticket for the campaign. Women constituted 8.5 per cent of the nominated candidates. Over 70 per cent of the 89,576 registered voters took part in the elections, exceeding the 25 per cent minimum requirement. Seven parties and 185 candidates were vying for places in Nagorno Karabakh's fourth parliament, with two

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thirds of the parliament's 33 seats to be elected directly and one third under a proportional system.

The preliminary report of the public international law and policy group delegation to the 19 June 2005 Nagorno Karabakh parliamentary elections concluded that Nagorno Karabakh had made demonstrable progress in building democracy and its authorities had made serious effort to conduct the 2005 polls by democratic means. The new electoral code in particular had seemed to have helped unlock the political energies of the Karabakh people while at the same time channelling those energies in democratic directions by facilitating the establishment of political parties. Districts appeared to be established on the basis of technical considerations rather than political considerations. While there remained room for further improvement, there was reason too for optimism that the people of Nagorno Karabakh could consolidate the democratic progress witnessed in the 19 June elections.

The public international law and policy group delegation reported that the general climate at the polling places had seemed to be positive and businesslike. There had been no evidence of intimidation or any climate of fear or uncertainty on the part of voters. In addition, it was noted that electoral law changes introduced by the Central Election Commission had opened up the democratic space for political parties. Competition in that arena had adhered to generally accepted international electoral standards. In their totality, the evolution of the voting system towards a more democratic process, the nature of the electoral campaign, and the conduct of voters and officials on election day were strong signs that Nagorno Karabakh had made significant progress towards establishing a functioning and, it was hoped, sustainable democracy. It saluted the voters, candidates and in particular the Central Election Commission for demonstrating a serious commitment towards establishing a democratic system in Nagorno Karabakh and working within its rules and procedures before and during the election. The election environment had been calm and no reports of general intimidation had been received.

The public international law and policy group delegation was composed of members having a balance of experience in international election monitoring and democracy-building in the former Yugoslavia and Afghanistan, as well as regional expertise.

I should be grateful if you would have the present letter circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Armen **Martirosyan**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative of Armenia to the United Nations